

The Civil War: America's First Total War



The Balance of Power

- At the start of the war, the United States had an immense material advantage.
 - 2:1 in population
 - 6:1 in factories
 - 2.3:1 in railroad tracks
 - 17:1 in textiles
 - 32:1 in firearms
 - Almost all naval shipyards were in the North
- But Confederate defeat was far from inevitable. Why?

Fighting the War

- The Civil War would be far more bloody and “modern” than anyone expected.
- The new technologies of war
 - Railroads
 - Steamships and ironclads
 - Crude submarines
 - Telegraphs and observation balloons.

The Rifle

- What's a rifle?
- Warfare for more than 200 years had revolved around smooth-bore muskets.
- In the Civil War, rifled muskets, accurate to 600 yards or more, replaced smooth-bore muskets.
 - Immense casualties
 - Traditional combat tactics ineffective
 - Gave defenders a large advantage



A smoothbore musket ball vs. a minie ball

Changes in Battlefield Tactics



The First Battle of Bull Run, 1861



The Siege of Petersburg, 1864-1865

Death, Trauma, and the Civil War



The Union at War

- The war meant that the northern vision for the nation triumphed.
 - The northern meaning of freedom won.
- The role of the federal government expanded.
- Government policies favorable to the North were implemented.
 - High tariffs
 - Free land in the west
 - A “northern” transcontinental railroad



The meeting of the two ends of the transcontinental railroad, 1869

Northern War Opposition

- A vocal minority opposed or criticized the war.
 - Many believed the South should have been allowed to secede.
 - Many supported the war but opposed its transformation into a war about slavery.
 - Many opposed the growth of federal power during the war.
- The Democratic Party was the home to opposition to the war.



A political cartoon mocking Northern supporters of peace.

The New York City Draft Riot

- The largest instance of open opposition to the war in the North.
- Occurred in July of 1863.
- A response to the institution of the draft.
- Many of the rioters were Irish immigrants who opposed emancipation.
- The riot lasted for four days.
 - Rioters destroyed
 - Draft offices.
 - Mansions of wealthy Republicans.
 - Houses of known abolitionists.
 - An orphanage for black children.
 - Rioters targeted African-Americans for violence.
 - An estimated 100 were killed.
 - 1000s more fled the city.

The Confederacy at War

- Throughout the war, the South faced severe challenges.
 - An agrarian economy
 - The union blockade
 - Ideological commitments
 - State and local autonomy
 - Slavery
 - Economic collapse



A bread riot in Richmond, 1863

Southern Disunity

- Large segments of southern society opposed the Confederacy.
 - Slaves
- Unionists
 - Most common in areas with few slaves.
- Often attempted to hinder the war effort.
 - 50,000 fought for the Union.
- Resisted the draft and the collection of supplies.
- In some regions, they even violently resisted the Confederate government.

